THE IDLER

Nr 37 35 Cents

A Very Modest Budget

Dow Shalt Not Kill

Saga of the Knobs

WASHINGTON, D.C.
December 1967

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Washington Local

A Very Modest Budget

COMMISSIONER WASHINGTON HAS presented the city with a very modest budget. The document continues the District's long tradition of fiscal humility when dealing with the executive branch and Congress. The city repeatedly conceals its real needs in order to present what is called in the trade "a responsible budget," a gutted version of the year's demands--altered, abridged, and muffled to please the faceless men of the Budget Bureau and the florid-faced dollar grinders of the congressional appropriations committees.

The President says: "Let's don't treat the Nation's Capital as a stepchild. Let's try to make it a model child. Let's try to make it the best we can produce. Let's try to let it be the city that every other city in the world would like to copy."

The Commissioner says: "We are at a crossroads point in the history of Washington, D.C. We must unite in our efforts to move along the paths that could lead to self-government and to a city of decent living standards, of secure streets and homes of grace and warmth--a city that will be a place of pride to its residents, its visitors and to the entire nation."

And the school budget request is cut $33 million.

Some model. Some path.

In fairness, it must be said that Mr. Washington didn't arrive until the budgetary process was well under way. He had little time to make marked departures from the spending plans of his predecessors. And he indicates that he will try to do better next year.

But how? He is unlikely to extricate the city from its current fiscal problem by that time: he will still be faced with enormous needs and limited sources of revenues. The most probable eventuality is that we will be presented with another "modest" budget and another apology for it from the District Building.

What this adds up to is this: we are not about to become a "model city" or a "showplace of the nation" or even to meet some of the most humble goals in housing, education and social services. We, like most other cities, are going to be very lucky just to keep our heads above water. And we would be considerably better prepared to cope with the situation if Mr. Washington, the President, and those who spew out words on their behalf, would stop jiving about a metropolis of make-believe and instead start telling the city and the Congress just how bad things are and just what it's going to take to change them.

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One of the ways this could be done is through the budget. As long as Congress wants to call the tune in this city, it should pay the piper a living wage. If that means a vast increase in the federal payment, then it should be so stated. If that means permitting the city to borrow large sums for capital projects then it should be requested. It does neither citizen nor congressman any service to pretend that we can solve our economic and social problems on an antiquated fiscal basis. Congress eventually will have to face up to the true cost of bringing order, progress and humanity to our cities, and Commissioner Washington--as chief executive of the one city directly under the control of Congress--could serve well as spokesman for all the nation's cities.

But such, it is argued, is not politically feasible. Congress would merely become outraged if the city were to tell it the truth. And perhaps this is so. But here is the decision that has to be made: is this government going to fight for programs on a scale large enough to bring significant change or is it going to be content to adjust priorities within the financial restrictions that have been placed upon it? If the former is judged impossible, then we should prepare ourselves psychologically to this fact, judge our spending accordingly, and stop kidding those in our community who desperately need help that it is otherwise.

For example, it makes little sense to spend (as is proposed) $35 million on subway and freeway projects in a city with a substandard education system, a serious shortage of adequate housing and a major job problem for large numbers of its citizens. If we are not to expect sizable increases in city revenues, there are much better ways to spend the $35 million than on transportation programs that don't even materially contribute to much of the city's ability to get from one place to another. The very people who most need a decent school system, decent housing and improved employment opportunity, are the ones who will benefit least from the expensive transportation schemes underway.

If the belt is going to stay tight--as appears to be the case--the District is going to have to make some intensive readjustments in its priorities or else give up some of the most worthy of its hopes to failure.

It is early yet, too early to tell whether the new government will handle its fiscal affairs with frankness and courage. The District Building still has that look

The Idler

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of a house which has just been moved into. But as Deputy Commissioner Fletcher told the Council the other day: "Sooner or later, we are not going to be able to hide behind our newness. We're going to have to get on the ball and get the job done."

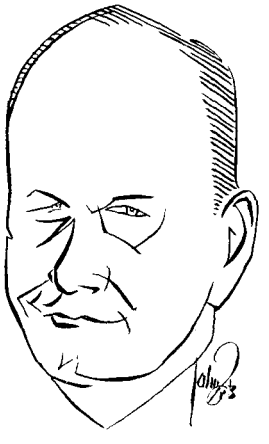
District Notes. . .

THE FREEWAY CONTROVERSY is getting more bizarre all the time. District Highway Director Thomas Airis demonstrated again last month how well freeway supporters can foul up the verbal as well as the physical environment. He went before a House subcommittee and stated that if Washington didn't complete its freeways "it is entirely possible the federal government might require return of 40 percent of the 90 percent-10 percent funding already advanced, since the system would no longer be interstate. The financial chaos that would result for the District's Highway fund from such an action is too horrible to contemplate."

The only trouble with Mr. Airis's nightmare is that it is highly improbable. The man who has thrown the latest monkey wrench into the freeway plans is Transportation Secretary Alan Boyd, who also has a good deal to say whether the District has to pay back any money or not. It is unlikely that, after urging the District to slash its freeway program, he will turn around and send the city into financial chaos for following his advice.

Mr. Boyd, a little late to be sure, has discovered what a large number of local residents knew all along: the freeway system includes unnecessary and, indeed, congestion-causing roads. In short, the District is proceeding to make a very costly mistake. Which shows that inflation has even hit the price of superfluousness.

Secretary Boyd has been told by powers on the Hill to recant within thirty days or face congressional legislation forcing the freeways through the city. Let's just hope that he's as determined as he is correct in this situation.



BOYD: Thirty Days to Recant

WASHINGTON THROUGH A PALMED CLEARING OF
A FOGGED OVER BUS WINDOW LAST THURSDAY

Rivulets filigree the view ahead
Misshapen forms zig splosh zag
Polka crescents pigment a field of lead---
City of monuments melted into slag.

--Armando Rendon

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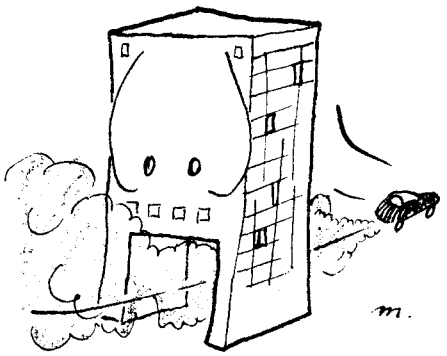
THE DISTRICT COUNCIL is going to have to be a bit more careful in approving urban renewal projects than it has been up to date, if it is not to share in repetitions of renewal flops such as that of Southwest, where in just a matter of a few years the city has built a community complete with ghetto and social isolation. Several Council members expressed misgivings about the air-rights housing planned over the freeway in NW, but for no particularly good reason they were still inclined to go along with the arguments of the expert bureaucrats who said that people shouldn't mind living over a pollution tunnel. Seventy-five percent of the air pollution in this city comes from the internal combustion engine and it is a perverted sense of values that makes people take second place to the automobile.



The Ft. Lincoln Park affair seemed a mite too expeditious as well. It is known that the President wants this project badly, but the Council should learn to beware of planners in a hurry. As someone told me once: "The only thing wrong with planners is that they hate people."

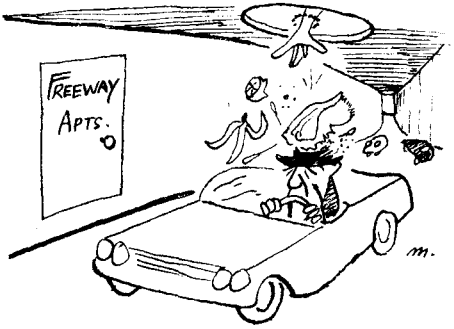
Here are some of the questions the city ought to answer before the first buildings are constructed on the NE site:

What is the proper balance and placement of the various types of housing on the site? Will there be adequate low cost housing and will it be isolated or integrated with other housing?

How will public transportation be provided for residents of the area?

Will there be adequate shopping facilities for low as well as high income residents.

What social services will be provided?



How will the sort of public school problems that have developed in SW be avoided?

To its credit, the Council has laid down guideline for citizen participation in the project, which should help to answer intelligently these and similar questions. But unless there is the closest supervision of the planners, it is all too possible that the project will become another instance in which those who need most will come out the short end. --(s. s.)

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Flotsam & Jetsam

THE STORY DIDN'T tell us whether the President carries this poll around in his pocket, but a recent survey taken at the Pickle Packers International, Inc., convention in Chicago found that LBJ was favored by pickle packers over all other candidates for the presidency. The count was taken by a certain Sandy Wolsfeld, Miss Pickle Poll, who received one vote in the survey herself.

THE SWINGING CHARITY SET: There's going to be a telethon on local Washington television in February to raise money to build two swimming pools at a youth institution in the area. Those who phone in big pledges will have an opportunity to have lunch with Art Buchwald, go to a sports event with George Plimpton, sail with Teddy Kennedy, have maid service by Joan Kennedy, or hear Bobby sing a childhood camp song.

AN ELECTRONIC BARRIER against infiltration proposed for Vietnam is known as "McNamara's Wall." It is now suggested that it include drive-up windows.

A SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT in California actually received this letter: "I have stood an awful lot from you and your teachers without yelling half as loud as most of the taxpayers in this city. But there is a limit to your foolishness. When you sent home William's census card for correction, you certainly hit a new low. You listed William as a Caucasian. I want you to know that both William and his father are white Americans and so am I, and we go to church regularly. Personally, I think you are probably a Caucasian yourself."

WE'RE TOLD THAT when a Negro lady official of the District government testified before Sen. Robert Byrd recently, he several times addressed her as "Ma'am." When the transcript of the hearing was published, however, the references were deleted.

WE OCCASIONALLY GET letters from readers who say they don't get the magazine regularly. Doesn't surprise us particularly, judging from the way our own mail gets fouled up. But if Larry O'Brien's political duties cause him to neglect you, let us know. We'll provided the missed issues and extend your subscription to boot.

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Dow Shalt Not Kill

By Howard Zinn

HOWARD ZINN is a professor at Boston University. He has written "Vietnam: The Logic of Withdrawal," "The Southern Mystique," and "SNCC: The New Abolitionists." The following article was written for the BU News and was distributed by LNS, a news service for the so-called underground press. The university referred to is Boston U.

MANY faculty members and students, being passionate opponents of American violence in Vietnam and also insistent civil libertarians, are troubled by the recent demonstrations against Dow Chemical. No dilemma exists where the action is merely protest --by picketing, leafleting, speaking --against Dow, napalm, and the war. That is a plain exercise of speech, press and assembly. But physical interposition, where Dow recruiters are blocked from carrying on their recruiting, opens puzzling questions. As one concerned both with civil liberties and the war, I would like to think aloud for awhile, in print, and try to reach some conclusions.

First, it seems to me that the "civil liberties" of Dow Chemical are not in question. "Civil liberties" encompass various forms of freedom of expression, as well as certain procedural guarantees against arbitrary police or judicial action, and are fairly well covered by the first, eighth and fourteenth Amendments. No one is abrogating Dow's right to express its views; indeed, the recent demonstrators in this area invited the Dow representative to state his case publicly, and gave him a platform for this purpose. If Dow wanted to set up a table, or hold a meeting, to declare its views, any interference would be a violation of civil liberties.

However, the actions of an individual or group, which (unlike even the most malicious or slanderous speech) have immediate and irremediable effects on the lives and liberties of others, must sometimes be restricted for the health and safety of the public. Thus we pass laws against murder, rape, arson. Thus we regulate the sale and manufacture of harmful products. We even restrict the restaurant owner's freedom to choose his customers by racial standards. To put it more broadly: the whole body of criminal and social legislation is designed to restrict some people's freedom of action (not their civil liberties) in order to safeguard the health and happiness of others. Therefore, a law which prevented Dow Chemical Co. from recruiting people who might be engaged in the manufacture, sale or promotion of a substance to be dropped on men, women and children in order to burn them to death would be easily as justifiable as the Meat Inspection Act of 1906. It would (unlike a law interfering with talk for or against such a substance) no more be an infringement of civil liberties than a law barring the indiscriminate sale of deadly poisons at the corner grocery.

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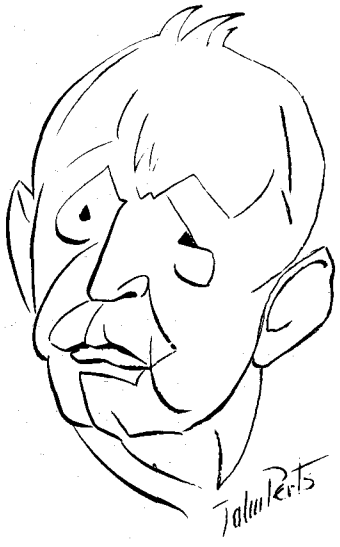
The doctrine that the "civil liberties" of corporations are violated by regulatory laws was predominant in this country during the age of the "Robber Barons" and was constitutionally sanctioned for about fifty years, until 1938. Then, a sharply-worded opinion by Justice Black (Connecticut General Life Insurance v. Johnson) declared that corporations should no longer be considered "persons" to be protected by the due process clause of the 14th Amendment. It soon became established in constitutional law that the regulation of business was not a deprivation of a



JUSTICE BLACK: No Longer Persons

civil liberty, that what is known as "substantive due process" would apply only to cases where real persons were being deprived of their rights of free expression. Today, it is well-established constitutionally that the U. S. government could make illegal the manufacture of napalm, and charge any persons recruiting for a napalm-manufacturing company with conspiring to violate the law.

But: there is no such law. Indeed, the government itself has ordered the napalm manufactured by Dow, and is using it to burn and kill Vietnamese peasants. Should private citizens (students, faculty--in this instance) act themselves, by physical interposition, against Dow Chemical's business activities? To do so would be to "take the law into your own hands." That is exactly what civil disobedience is: the temporary taking of the law into one's own hands, in order to declare what the law should be. It is a declaration that there is an incongruence between the law and humane values, and that sometimes this can only be publicized by breaking the law.

Civil disobedience can take two forms: violating a law which is obnoxious; or symbolically enacting a law which is urgently needed. When Negroes sat in at lunch counters, they were engaging in both forms: they violated state laws on segregation and trespassing; they were also symbolically enacting a public accomodations law even before it was written into the civil rights act of 1964.

Most of us, I assume, would support civil disobedience under some circumstances: we would commend those who defied the Fugitive Slave Act by harboring a Negro slave, and those who symbolically enacted emancipation by trying to prevent soldiers in Boston from returning Anthony Burns to his master. Otherwise--to declare that the law in all circumstances is to be obeyed--is to suppress the very spirit of democracy, to surrender individual conscience to an omnipotent state. Thus the issue becomes: under what circumstances is civil disobedience justified and is the Dow Chemical situation one of those circumstances?

It seems to me there are two essential conditions for the right to civil disobedience. One is that the human val-

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ue at stake must involve fundamental rights, like life, health, liberty. There is no real cause, for instance, to disobey a traffic light because it is inconveniently long. But human slavery, or racism, or war-- they are overwhelmingly important. Thus, the argument "what if everyone disobeyed the law every time it displeased them" falls before the observable fact that those who engage in civil disobedience are almost always law-abiding citizens who on certain very important issues deliberately, openly, temporarily violate the law to communicate a vital message to their fellow citizens.

What of Dow Chemical and napalm? Four American physicians, in a report, "Medical Problems of South Vietnam," have written: "Napalm is a highly sticky inflammable jelly which clings to anything it touches and burns with such heat that all oxygen in the area is exhausted within moments. Death is either by roasting or by suffocations. Napalm wounds are often fatal (estimates are 90%). Those who survive face a living death. The victims are frequently children." Napalm is dropped daily on the villages, the forests, the people of Vietnam by American bombers; the saturation bombing of that tiny country is one of the cruelest acts perpetrated by any nation in modern history; it ranks with the destruction of Lidice by the Germans, the crushing of the Hungarian rebellion by the Russians, the recent mass slaughter in Indonesia. Dr. Richard E. Perry, an American physician, wrote in Redbook, in January 1967, on his return from Vietnam: "I have been an orthopedic surgeon for a good number of years, with a rather wide range of medical experience. But nothing could have prepared me for my encounters with Vietnamese women and children burned by napalm. It was shocking and sickening, even for a physician, to see and smell the blackened flesh."

We are not, then, dealing with trivialities, but with monstrous deeds. This fact somehow becomes lost in the bland reasoned talk of businessmen and university officials, who speak as if Dow were just another business firm, recruiting for some innocuous purpose, making radios or toothpaste.

The root issue, it should be clear, is not simply napalm; it is the Vietnam war as a whole, in which a far-off country is being systematically destroyed, and its population decimated, by the greatest military power on earth. The war itself is the object of the civil disobedience; the use of napalm is one particularly bestial tactic in this war.

This brings us to the second condition for civil disobedience: the inadequacy of legal channels for redressing the grievance. This is manifestly true in the case of the Vietnam war, which is being waged completely outside the American constitutional process, by the President and a handful of advisors. Congress is troubled, but follows sheeplike what the White House decrees. The Supreme Court, by tradition, leaves foreign policy questions to the "political" branches of government (the President and Congress) but recently one of its more conservative members, Justice Potter Stewart, said that perhaps the Court should review the constitutionality of the war. This, after 100,000 American casualties! Citizens have taken to the auditoriums and to the streets precisely because they have no other way to

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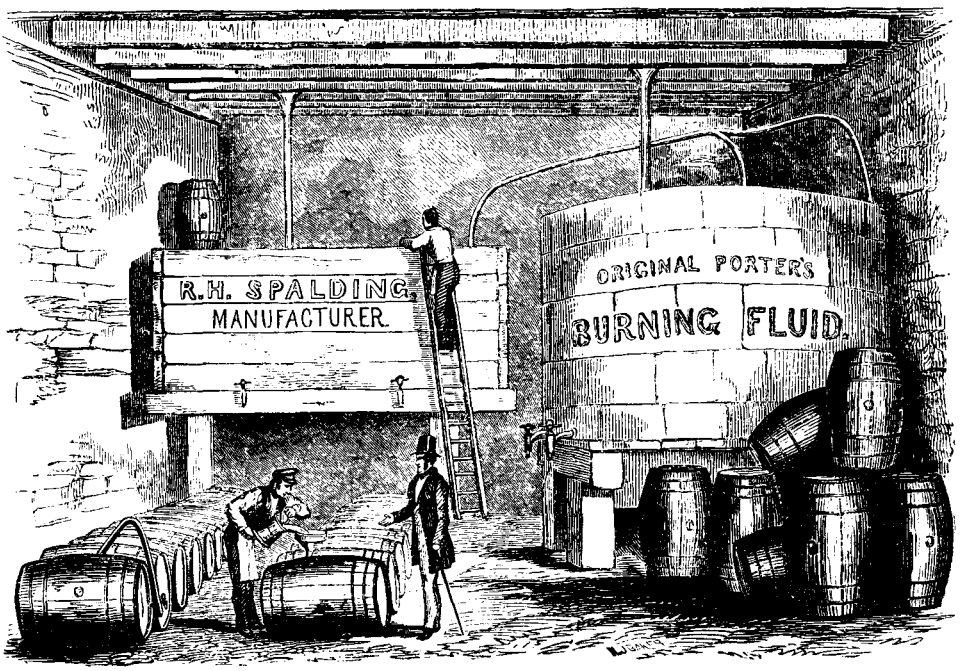
protest; yet both President and Vice-President declare with the brazenness of petty dictators that no civic outcry will change their policy. If ever there was an issue which called for civil disobedience, it is this run-away war.

Then why do we become uneasy when students interfere with Dow Chemical? Occasionally, we read of housewives blocking off a busy intersection because children have been killed there as a result of the lack of traffic lights. These housewives thereby interfere with the freedom of automobiles and of pedestrians, in order to temporarily regulate, or even disrupt, traffic on behalf of the lives of children--hoping this will lead to the permanent regulation of traffic by government. (Those are not the automobiles that killed the child, anymore than this Dow Chemical representative, or the student he is recruiting, is actually dropping the napalm bomb.)

Why do we so easily sympathize with actions like that, where perhaps one child was killed, and not with actions against Dow Chemical, where countless children have been victims? Is it possible that we subconsciously distinguish between the identifiable children down the street (who move us), and the faceless children of that remote Asian land (who do not)? Is it possible also that the well-dressed, harassed representative of Dow Chemical is more human, therefore more an object of sympathy to the well-dressed, harassed officials of the University (and to us), than the burning, bleeding, blurred faces of the Vietnamese?

There is a common argument which says: but where will these student actions lead? If we justify one act of civil disobedience, must we not justify them all? Do they then have the right to disobey the Civil Rights Acts? Where does it stop? That argument withers away, however, once we recognize the distinction between free speech, where absolute toleration is a social good, and free action, where the existence of



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values other than free speech demands that we choose right over wrong--and respond accordingly. We should remember that the social utility of free speech is in giving us the informational base from which we can then make social choices in action. To limit free speech is to distort our capacity to make such choices. To refrain from making choices is to say that beyond the issue of free speech we have no substantive values which we will express in action. If we do not discriminate in the actions we support or oppose, we cannot rectify the terrible injustices of the present world.

Whether the issue of the Vietnam war is more effectively presented by protest and demonstration (that is, the exercise of speech, press, assembly) rather than by civil disobedience, is a question of tactics, and varies with each specific situation. Different student groups (at Harvard and MIT, for instance) have used one or another against Dow recruitment, and each tactic has its own advantages. I tend to favor the protest tactic as keeping the central issue of the war clearer. But if students or faculty engaged in civil disobedience, I would consider that morally defensible.

So much for student-faculty action --but what of the University administration? The University's acceptance of Dow Chemical recruiting as just another business transaction is especially disheartening, because it is the University which tells students repeatedly on ceremonial occasions that it hopes students will be more than fact-absorbing automatons, that they will choose humane values and stand up for them courageously. For the University to sponsor Dow Chemical activities as a protective civil liberty means that the University (despite its courses in constitutional law) still accepts the 19th century definition of substantive due process as defending corporations against regulation, that (despite a library with books on civil liberties) the University does not understand what civil liberties are, that (despite its entrance requirement of literacy) the University has not read in the newspaper of the terrible damage our napalm bombs have done to innocent people.

The fact that there is only an indirect connection between Dow recruiting B. U. students and napalm dropped on Vietnamese villages, does not vitiate the moral issue. It is precisely the nature of modern mass murder that it is not visibly direct like individual murder, but takes on a corporate character, where every participant has limited liability. The total effect, however, is a thousands times more pernicious than that of the individual entrepreneur of violence. If the world is destroyed, it will be a white-collar crime, done in a business-like way, by large numbers of individuals involved in a chain of actions, each one having a touch of innocence.

Sometimes the University speaks of the "right of recruitment." There is no absolute right of recuitment, however, because (beyond the package of civil liberties connected with free expression and procedural guarantees, which are the closest we can get to "absolute" right) all rights are relative. I doubt that B. U. would open its offices to the Ku Klux Klan for recruiting, or that it would apply an absolute right of private enterprise to peddlers selling poisonous food on campus. When the University of Pennsylvania announced it would end its germ-warfare research project, it way saying that there was no absolute right to do research on anything for any purpose.

The existence of University "security" men (once known as campus police) testifies that all actions on campus are

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not equally tolerable. The University makes moral choices all the time. If it can regulate the movement of men into women's dormitories(in a firm stand for chastity or perhaps some other value equally dear), then why cannot it regulate the coming and going of corporations into the University, where the value is human life, and the issue is human suffering?

And if students are willing to take the risks of civil disobedience, to declare themselves for the dying people of Vietnam, cannot the University take a milder step, but one which makes the same declaration--and cancel the inivitation to Dow Chemical? Why cannot the University--so much more secure--show a measure of social commitment, a bit of moral courage? Should not the University, which speaks so often about students having "values," declare some of its own? It is written on no tablets handed down from heaven that the officials of a university may not express themselves on public issues. It is time (if not now, when? asks the Old Testament) for the University to forsake the neutrality of the IBM machines, and join the human race.

HUGH HAYNIE ...

"One More Sermon Like That and I've a Good Mind to Stop Answering His Prayers"

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The McDowell Papers

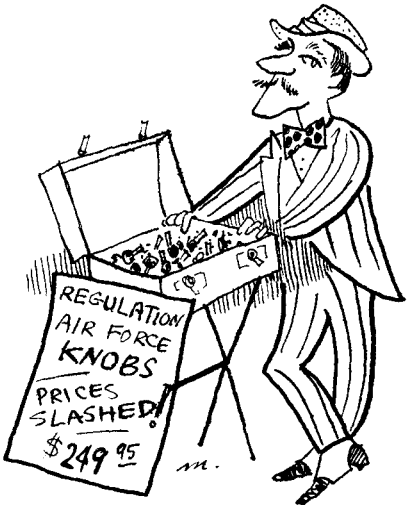
By Charles McDowell Jr.

THE little gadget looked like an ordinary plastic knob for a radio, but there must have been more to it than that because a knowledgeable computer at the Pentagon estimated the price of the thing at $35.

The gadget had a name: "Handle, spare, synchronizer," Two of them were needed urgently in Southeast Asia and the computer advised the Department of Defense to stock five more o them.

Drawing on the vast store of information that had been pumped into it over the years, the computer said the "sole source" of the gadget was an electronics manufacturer on Long Island.

So a military procurement clerk telephoned Long Island andaskedabout ordering the seven gadgets. The firm said it could supply the gadgets, but the price would be $277. 50 each.



That was the price "if buy quick" --soon it would be going up. Apparently trapped by military necessity, the Defense Department ordered the seven gadgets and paid $1, 942. 50 for them.

The gadgets were, as it turned out, just ordinary plastic knobs like you might find on a nice radio or television set.

The story of the knobs came out at a hearing conducted by a special investigations subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee. The subcommittee is looking into dozens of cases in which it thinks inefficiency in the Defense Department has allowed profiteers to rook the government.

Rep. Porter Hardy, Jr. , chairman of the investigation, said the situation was "miserable--the worst I've seen in the 21 years I've been around here. "

"Here we are relying on those doggone computers, " he said, "without considering the human errors that go into the cussed things. "

When Hardy tried to find the human errors, he said he always came up against the "good old buck passing. " He was angry, which he is very good at, and officers as high as generals were writhing in the front row while officers of the Long Island company writhed in a back row.

But to return to the saga of the knobs,

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another purchase order came in for 60 of them. The computer still said they were worth $35, but mentioned the prior price of $277.50 as a guide for the procurement clerk. The clerk, a conscientious woman, called the company and negotiated the price down to $229.70 per knob. She was proud to save the government $50 on each item, although she was dealing with a "sole supplier" and couldn't threaten to go elsewhere for the knobs.

Then came another request for knobs, 20 of them. This time the government had to pay $312.50 each for them.

And then this past summer there was a need for 50 more. By now the computer had dropped the $35 evaluation and simply said $26.75 was, for some reason, a good price of "sole supplier."

The order at that price apparently was canceled because by that time Rep. Otis G. Pike, a New York Democrat, had found out what was going on, and he was raising the devil. He said he knew of instances in which the government had been rooked out of $100,000 in the procurement of minor items like knobs. He helped inspire the investigation by Hardy's committee.

At the hearing, Pike provided the climax of the saga of the knobs. He said they were not manufactured by the Long Island company at all, but were purchased by it from a company on the West Coast.

He asked a Defense Department witness to estimate the price of each knob at the West Coast company, but the witness was not sure.

"Would you believe $1.62?" Pike asked. That was it, $1.62.

The government had purchased 87 of these $1.62 knobs for a total of $23,779, or an average of $273 each.

Naturally Congress is indignant about the sychronizer knobs and the implications that similar waste is perhaps widespread in the procurement of minor defense equipment. But several questions occur to a bystander.

Will Congress work up the same kind of indignation about the business ethics that seem to prevail among some suppliers of defense equipment?

Will the advocates of leaving the big decisions in Vietnam to the generals begin to wonder if the military mind, in the light of its arrangements of buying knobs, really is to be trusted greatly in calculating the risks of starting World War III in Asia?

Will Congress investigate the potential waste involved in almost invariably appropriating all the money the Defense Department asks for--about 60 percent of the budget--and often throwing in hundreds of millions of dollars for ships and planes the Defense Department did not even ask for?

Will it take those matters as seriously, anyway, as it takes those knobs?

(Richmond Times-Dispatch)

We're told that among radical groups, Dean Rusk is known as the "white peril."

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The Corner Aphorist

By Sam A. Darcy

☐IN THE NEW divorce measure proposed in Italy a provision concerning Italians foreigners was reported by AP as follows:

"The measure would permit a divorce . . . two years after the other spouse, a non-Italian, has obtained a divorce or married a broad again."

☐WHEN THE SHAH of Iran visited Germany he was feted by West German President Lubke who likes to believe that he can talk English. He opened the festivities by raising his glass with a toast to the elegantly dressed ladies present: "Gentlemen, Upon the Ladies!"

☐THE PROFESSORS OF a number of leading universities were asked to give precise definitions of inflation. Each one turned out to be more complicated than the next. They agreed it couldn't be done in a sentence. A little Chinese lady, Miss I. Kuo from California volunteered:

"Inflation is when, after you get enough money to buy something, it isn't enough."

☐WHEN SOME OF us were children our parents sometimes said with pride that we were as smart as the president. Admittedly that was during the Harding Administration; and was not much of a boast. About LBJ it is difficult to say, does he not understand, or has he become so obsessed with making war that he is blind to everything else? For example:

LBJ says he is fighting war to save our system of free enterprise. Yet where Franklin Roosevelt in 1933 drew 5 billion dollars out of our gross national product for public expenditures (about 5 %), LBJ is drawing 145 billion (about 20%). The free enterprise sector has, because of the demands of the war, shrunk in that time from 95% to 80%.

LBJ says he is making war to establish democracy in Vietnam. The polls and all other indications show that a majority of the American people are against his course. Yet he says he will pursue his course no matter what anyone in the U. S. says. What kind of democracy is this?

LBJ says that he is doing all this for the welfare of the American people. Yet when he took over from John Kennedy the country was on the road to marked prosperity and well-being and taxes were being cut.

Since then, the stock market has become seriously depressed, taxes are increased enough to hurt and he is demanding more, we are losing gold in alarming volume, there is a staggering inflation, and unemployment is rising. Whose welfare is he speaking for?

LBJ compares himself to Washington during the American Revolution. Wash-

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ington led our Revolution to drive out a foreign interloper. But in the Vietnam War we are the foreign interloper. LBJ is analoguous to George III, not to the great Washington.

Yet some Republicans say that what we need is more war, not less!

What a world!

☐IT'S ENOUGH TO make one shudder to hear a pretty lady like Shirley Temple fix her mouth hard and urge more killing in Vietnam. Were it not for that sign of moral disintegration we would be sorry that she was defeated in the California elections. Were she elected she could team up again with her old dance partner George Murphy and do some of the old dance routines that were prevalent in their youth, such as the one step and two step; in fact they could combine them, one step forward, two steps backward.

☐A DRIVER FOR the Jones Motor Co., painted on the rear of his truck this prayer:

Oh Lord! Before I die
And turn to dust
I pray to Christ
That I can pass
One Greyhound bus.

☐THERE IS A new rush of spy scares in Britain and the U. S. Whenever cold war material grows short someone comes up with some horrendous spy story. Cousin Barnegat says it reminds him of Stephen Leacock's great Russian spy Pulhispantsoff. Pulhispantsoff went on a secret mission for the Czar. It was so secret, he himself didn't know what it was about.

☐Happy New Year!

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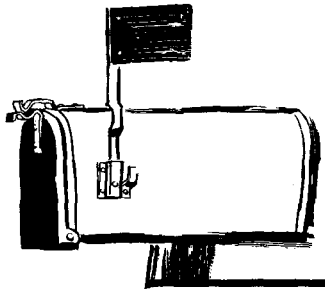

Correspondence

I AM FORCED to take exception to certain comments which appear under "Idling" (November issue). I agree, of course, as a matter of prediction, that there will be more violence before either the problem of Vietnam or the problems of the cities are solved. However, I suspect that your last column on page 3 and the continuation on page 4 mean something more.

Are you not saying that you and the New Left are so sure of the correctness of your position that, given your inability to gain adequate support through the political process, you feel morally justified in bypassing this process and resorting to violence?

If you are, I could not disagree with you more.

Perhaps I am prejudiced, because some of my friends have been imprisoned by Stroessner, Castro and the CIA, that is by men who are just as certain as you of the correctness of their position, perhaps even more certain. Nevertheless, I regard the whole constitutional process (not merely the political part of it) as extremely precious. For its sake we should be prepared to tolerate some pretty profound disagreements, some fairly irregular progress in solving our common problems, and even at times some very slow progress. And we should be generous in imputing motives.

Of course, you may argue that such tolerance requires more perserverence and patience than are possessed by a sizable minority of the population, including some who have suffered so much they have a right to immediate redress (e.g. Americans of African descent) and some who only imagine that they are suffering (e.g. the extreme right). If you do, I will agree with you. Still I stick to my guns. Violence and revolution should be last resorts. (When in the course of human events. . . . etc.)

In the first place, practically no one is so wise that he does not need criticism, even from those who are mistaken, to make him aware of his errors or at least keep him on his toes intellectually. Among the first victims of a breakdown in the constitutional process are rational discussion and dissent of all kinds, except that by the violent protestors.

In the second place, the destruction of the constitutional process very likely leads to a polarization or monopolization of power in the hands of a few individuals or groups, even though these may be at loggerheads with each other. Yet we know that throughout history very few men have possessed the virtues that enable one to resist the temptations of power-- the virtues that kept Washington from turning into a king or dictator, that enabled Mustapha Kemel to release power, and kept Munoz-Marin from turning into a Huey Long.

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In the third place, the answers to most problems are not so obvious, simple or clearcut, either in their moral or practical aspects, that one is justified in plunging the community into a constitutional crisis over them. In general, some things may be clearly this way or that, but when we go from the plane of generality to the plane of brass tacks, as we must in legislation and administration, things become much more complex. Much of the New Left reminds me of a minister whom a friend heard preach a sermon on "Transportation as a Moral Issue." The minister brought God down hard on the side of suburban railroads.

In brief, we must all try to bind ourselves by the constitutional process as much as possible, because human frailty of judgement and human inablity to resist the temptations of power are both very widespread. Of course, precisely because we nearly all of us are victims of the human condition, we must also help each other as much as possible. We must heed the cry of the rioters, but within the constitutional process (which should be kept flexible and dynamic in this day and age if it is to keep its moral authority).

As regards the means employed in Vietnam, is there any such thing as a "moral" war, and if so what is it? Is Vietnam very different from Korea on a moral plane, and why? Just what is it specifically about napalm that makes it so morally different from 500 pound bombs or sharpened stakes coated with fecal matter? Since in any war, some civilians will be accidentally killed, at what point does the percentage become so large as to make the war immoral? And what about civilians accidentally killed by planes shot down or by anti-aircraft missiles which fail to hit their target (a large percentage) and also do not destroy themselves (an unknown percentage)? And what are the relations between the political war and the military war? Is one essential to the other? Do they have the same moral validity? Can we win either or both when the enemy's chief advantages appear to be the immutable jungle and the apparently immutable condition of administration in the South Vietnamese government?

Most of these questions must be answered if we are to make a sound decision on Vietnam. Yet the answers are not easy to come by. I suspect that if our Vietnam policy is wrong, it is wrong because of the cumulative effect of small errors of judgement on each of a number of very complicated issues. Under this circumstance, the morality or immorality of the war would be quite hazy. In any case, I do not think the kind of certainty which would justify a violent bypassing of the constitutional process is obtainable with respect to this problem.

Lewis Smith
San Juan, P. R.

(THE POINT I was trying to make was that a bold confrontation on Negro rights and the Vietnam war was necessary and that if this confrontation contains an element of violence, I find it difficult to condemn it or to be surprised by it. It is too late in many instances to start talking of "law and order," constitutional process," and "rational discussion." When have these luxuries been granted the ghetto Negro in the past? Why should he relate to concepts that have too often been used as weapons against him? What is the constitutional process that led us into the Vietnamese war? And what of the Constitution to those now in jail because their conscience refused to let them fight in Vietnam? It is up to the government, not the protesters, to make constitutional process operative.

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It is also important to keep in mind the nature of the violence to date. The major violence of the city rioters has been directed against property. The human victims have been largely caused by the insensitive suppression of the riots by police and national guard forces. The same was true at the Pentagon protest. Certainly, the troops and U. S. Marshalls were repeatedly provoked by the protesters, but the major violence came when the marshalls--acting like bullies rather than professional police officers--used unnecessary roughness on the field. The record of riot and protest suppression in this country of late suggests that the government has a considerable capacity and will for violence on its own part.

Finally, the morality of the war issue hinges on the "when" in "When in the course of human events. . . " For many of us, the "when" came late in Vietnam. I am not a moral absolutist and was inclined initially to go along with the effort there. But it has become more and more clear that we are embroiled in a military, political and moral disaster and that our continued pursuit of the war has lost all cost effectiveness under even the most favorable moral accounting system. There is growing doubt not only among laymen, but apparently within government circles as well. Even LBJ's coterie of yea-sayers cannot conceal the immense incertitude of this project. Under such circumstances it is to be expected that men of deep moral conviction should move towards civil disobedience. The exact point at which each man's conscience becomes outraged varies; it is not something that can be discussed abstractly. Can we be so confident that the New England farmer or merchant had more serious grievances against the Crown than the Detroit Negro has against the white community or the draft resister has against the federal government? I think not. The burden is not upon the protesters, but upon the government, to prove that it is worthy of the people's confidence. Until such proof is offered, each man's best guide and defence is his own conscience. -- s. s.)

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